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September 11, 2013

Good morning, my name is Sarah Panken and I am the Director of Active Communities at the Michigan Fitness Foundation. I am here today to speak in support of Vulnerable Roadway User (VRU) House Bills 4792 and 4799. The Michigan Fitness Foundation works to make healthy choices easy choices so that people can live healthy, active lifestyles in communities designed to support physical activity.

Over the past three years, Michigan has made huge strides in creating policies that encourage communities to install active transportation facilities. With the Michigan complete streets movement, including state legislation, a Michigan Department of Transportation policy, and more than 80 adopted local policies, there is an increasing number of roadways being designed and operated with all users in mind. Having more on-the-ground active transportation facilities increases opportunities for people to walk, bike, or roll to get to where they need to go, thus incorporating physical activity into their daily routine. Creating enhanced penalties for drivers that injure or kill a vulnerable roadway user will make streets safer for everyone, provide peace of mind to the increasing number of people using active transportation, and encourage more people to walk or bike in their communities.

According to the Michigan Traffic Crash Statistics, in 2012 alone:

- 1,981 bicyclists were involved in motor vehicle crashes, with 20 bicyclists killed and 1,598 injured.
- 2,397 pedestrians were involved in motor vehicle crashes, with 133 pedestrians killed and 1,962 injured.

To reduce these numbers and save lives, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Action Team of the Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Council, of which the Michigan Fitness Foundation is a member, has adopted a multi-tiered approach to increase safety that includes VRU legislation.

Having safer roadways for active transportation also helps create vibrant places. Studies show that people want to live in and businesses want to invest in walkable, bikeable, accessible communities. The VRU legislation is part of creating a culture of walking and cycling, and making Michigan communities safe places for active transportation.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bills 4792 and 4799 today.



Sarah Panken
Director of Active Communities